



# Senator Dave Schmidt's

## UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA

3/6/03

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### Committee Assignments

Higher Education (Vice Chair)  
Education  
Economic Development  
Technology &  
Communications  
Rules

### Senate Bills to Watch

**SB 5904** – Creates prescription drug program for Seniors (*passed Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee and is now in Ways & Means*)

**SB 5807** – Makes changes to the state's BHP (*currently in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee*)

**SJR 8210 – (Schmidt's bill)** Amends the Washington State Constitution to allow for Blanket Primaries (*passed the Senate Government Operations & Elections Committee and is now in Senate Rules Committee*)

**SB 5661 – (Schmidt's bill)** Allows unused farming land to be used for athletic fields (*passed the Senate Land Use & Planning Committee and is now in Senate Rules*)

Dear Friends,

We've about reached the halfway point in the 2003 Legislative Session. I quickly want to update you on two important health care bills that recently passed the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee.

Health care costs continue to skyrocket, especially prescription drug costs. Seniors and those in our society on fixed incomes are continuing to see their incomes deteriorate as drug costs escalate.

While the federal government attempts to address the issue as a whole, I am supporting legislation here in Olympia that will help low-income elderly and disabled citizens in our state get the medication they need.

### Senate Bill 5904 creates four programs:

- A Medicaid senior prescription drug program for residents 65 and older with a family income up to 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) by way of a federal waiver.
- A prescription drug discount program, which requires the Health Care Authority to negotiate lower prices for drugs purchased by any enrolled Washington resident 55 and older or disabled, with a family income up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level.
- A pharmacy connection program through the Health Care Authority that provides information about, and helps eligible residents enroll in, manufacturer-sponsored assistance programs.
- Senior prescription drug information and training programs to educate seniors on safe and appropriate drug use.

Washington's Basic Health Plan (BHP) is for workers without employer-provided health care coverage. Because of rising health care costs and the state's \$2 billion revenue shortfall, the current structure of the BHP is not sustainable. Our choices are to change the benefits or reduce the number of people enrolled.

Senate Bill 5807 makes changes to the program so that those most in need will not lose coverage and will have access to preventative health care without additional costs. Coverage mandates will be trimmed to cut costs, and eligibility will change from an annual income of \$36,800 to \$27,600 for a family of four.

Also, the Senate Republican Supplemental Budget plan includes provisions to crack down on people who, through deceit, abuse the BHP.

As always, please contact my office with any questions or concerns. It is a pleasure to serve you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

Sen. Dave Schmidt, 44<sup>th</sup> Legislative District